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## THE SEARCH FOR THE "ALABAMA," AND THE NEW ERA IN NAVAL WARFARE

The exploits of the Confederate cruiser, "Alabama," and her fatal encounter with the "Kearsarge" have often been described. Much less is known of the efforts put forth by the Union navy to intercept the destroyer. The circumstances under which the "Alabama" left Liverpool in July, 1862, were most exasperating to the North, and gave a strong incentive to effect her capture or destruction. This seemed to have been rendered imperative by the burning of more than fifty Northern merchant vessels, valued at above four and a half millions of dollars. Yet for nearly two years the ship under the command of Captain Raphael Semmes, ranged the seas unscathed,—a fact which requires some explanation. In the view of the present writer, this explanation is to be found ultimately in the conditions that determined naval strategy during the Civil War. Naval warfare seems to have been revolutionized less by armor plate and the high power gun, than by trans-marine telegraphy with and without wires, by the sub-marine bell and the search-light,—which have served in a most definite way to eliminate chance from campaigns at sea. How true this is will appear from the following account of the search for the "Alabama."

The United States Government took action looking to the capture of the "Alabama" as soon as her departure from Liverpool could have been definitely known at Washington. It was on the twenty-ninth of July, 1862, that the "Alabama"—not yet so christened—slipped from her station in the Mersey and put out to sea. It was a fortnight later that the Secretary of the Navy, Gideon Welles, instructed Captain Guert Gansevoort of the U. S. S. "Adirondack," lying at Hampton Roads,—to proceed to the vicinity of Nassau, West Indies, and to notify the Union cruisers in those waters that they should be on the watch for the "Alabama." The abundance of Union shipping in that quarter and the many safe retreats offered by the numerous channels and inlets within the Archipelago, would quite

probably induce the new sea-rover to make in that direction. So guessed Secretary Welles, and his guess was not so bad, as the sequel proved.<sup>1</sup> The Union force on duty among the Antilles was inadequate and required unity of control, if it were to afford any effective protection to commerce. Early in September, therefore, was created the West Indies squadron under command of Commodore Charles Wilkes (of "Trent" fame), which was to consist of seven vessels.<sup>2</sup> But even with this fleet, the measure of protection was utterly insufficient.

The list of captures of Northern merchant ships, as given in the Official Records,<sup>3</sup> tells its own story. The order for the assembling of a West Indies squadron bears date of September 8, 1862. On that very day the United States whaling bark, "Ocean Rover," hailing from Massachusetts and laden with eleven hundred barrels of oil (presumably the fruit of her forty months' cruise), was so unfortunate as to fall in with the vessel commanded by Captain Semmes. Though valued at \$70,000, the "Ocean Rover" was burned. The next day, two more whalers, the "Alert" and the "Weather Gauge," met the same fate. On the thirteenth, the "Altamaha;" on the fourteenth, the "Benjamin Tucker;" on the sixteenth, the "Courser;" on the seventeenth, the "Virginia;" on the eighteenth, the "Elisha Dunbar,"—all whalers,—were burned. The "Brilliant," grain-leaden, captured by the "Alabama" on October third and given to the flames in the evening twilight, furnished a spectacle (to the crew of the assailant) throughout the night. The "Brilliant" was appraised at \$164,000. During October, eight vessels,—three of them valued at \$100,000 to \$164,000 each,—were burned. Others were released on bond.

We are not concerned here with the ethics of the situation just described, but only with the effect on the Northern mind and its reaction on the Administration. That such losses as these of valuable ships and yet more valuable cargoes should create a tremendous sensation in Northern commercial centers,

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<sup>1</sup> Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies in the War of the Rebellion, Series I (indicated hereafter, "O. R."), I. 416.

<sup>2</sup> I, 470.

<sup>3</sup> III, 677, et seq.

and should cause a sting of resentment throughout the Union, was most natural and must have had a profound influence at Washington.

The early autumn captures of the Confederate cruiser necessitated additions to the force of the pursuers. Consequently, on October twenty-second, the "Mohican;" on the twenty-fourth, the "San Jacinto" and "Dacotah;" on the twenty-eighth, the "Sabine;" and on the twenty-ninth, the "Onward" were ordered to join the pursuit. November sixth, the "Vanderbilt," stationed at New York, was instructed to cruise in the Gulf stream on the European route of our ships, where recent depredations had occurred.

These vessels went forth, and others went forth; they searched the ocean highways far and near, but did not find the "Alabama." Day after day, month after month, for nearly two years Captain Semmes could record in his journal the capture of Northern merchantmen, and he usually closed the entry with the laconic observation: "Ship burned."

During all this time the "Alabama" was not engaged by a United States cruiser for the best of all reasons,—that, save in one instance, she could not be found; and in that one instance, she eluded the enemy. The motive of Captain Semmes evidently was to weaken the North by destroying its maritime commerce. It would thus appear to the Captain that the loss of the "Alabama"—the ever possible outcome of an engagement—would be a real blow to the cause which was the object of his devotion. So much is reasonable conjecture; as to the inability of the Union vessels to locate the Confederate cruiser, there is no room for doubt.

In the days of the "Alabama," the ocean cable, wireless telegraphy, and the search-light—those most indispensable adjuncts of naval warfare,—were either not yet invented or not in use. It was inevitable, therefore, that the exact position of Semmes' ship should be a mystery to the Washington authorities, to their foreign representatives, and to the Navy. Most strikingly is this mystification revealed by the group of orders just referred to, issued in October and November, 1862. To intercept the "Alabama," the "Mohican" was ordered to the

vicinity of Porto Praya, Cape Verde Islands; the "San Jacinto" to the West Indies; the "Dacotah" to the waters off Nova Scotia and Newfoundland; the "Sabine" to Brazil by way of the Azores; the "Onward" to the English route,—all within a week.<sup>4</sup> "Have you any news of the "Alabama"?—this is the ever-recurring question in the despatches; and it was not until the "Alabama" steamed into Cherbourg harbor, and the European telegraph lines could be brought into service, that an effective answer could be given to this question.

Without cable and the wireless system, the ocean environment is most strictly circumscribed. Thus befell not a few strange appositions and avoidances between pursuer and pursued in the game of hide and seek we are describing. Of these, one of the most interesting occurred in the Strait of Sunda in the late autumn of 1863. The Alabama had been making her way north-easterly through the Indian Ocean from the Cape of Good Hope to the East Indies. As early as January, 1863, Secretary Welles had surmised that Semmes would seek the Strait of Sunda, "through which our merchantmen pass to and from China."<sup>5</sup> On Monday, November ninth, the "Alabama" was close to the Strait. Semmes' journal tells us what happened. Tuesday broke with a heavy rain in which the cruiser got under sail. As the day advanced, the weather cleared with a fresh breeze out of the west. Steam added to sail-power bore the ship among picturesque islands and through the channel, along whose shores native villages hovered amid the cocoa-nut groves, whose naked denizens crowded the water's edge to see the vessel pass. At two in the afternoon, the Strait was passed; and, as she was shaping her course, the "Alabama" "descried a clipper-looking ship under topsails standing toward North Island." A chase and a blank shot made the merchantman show the stars and stripes, and she was soon a Confederate prize. It was the "Winged Racer," from Manila to New York, laden with sugar and hemp. It required nearly the whole of the night to procure what was wanted out of the ship; then she was fired, and the "Alabama" went her way.

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<sup>4</sup>O. R., I, 416; 518; 522; 523; 533.

<sup>5</sup>O. R., II, 58.

There, in Sunda Strait,—beneath whose waters slept the volcanic might of Krakatoa, still unloosed,—should have occurred a combat more picturesque than that fought later outside Cherbourg break-water. For at Anjer—some thirty miles from the spot where the “Winged Racer” met her fate,—lay, until that very day, the United States Steam Sloop “Wyoming,” whose main purpose for many months had been an encounter with the famed Confederate vessel. As early as January, the “Wyoming” had been ordered to search for the “Alabama” in the Sunda waters.<sup>6</sup> Diverted by the anti-foreign outbreak in Japan in the summer of 1863, and the affair of Shimonoseki, McDougal, her commander, could not report his arrival at Batavia before the sixth of October. The “Wyoming” under Commander David McDougal, a native of Ohio, is described as a third-class vessel of the screw sloop type, bearing seven guns and one hundred and thirty-five men, with a tonnage of nine hundred and ninety-seven. Her record on the Eastern station seems to have satisfied the Navy Department; and doubtless she would have acquitted herself well in an action with the “Alabama,” which was but slightly her superior in size and equipment. But the golden moment passed and, though sought again, passed forever. The laurel and the crown went to another, more fortunate craft. In a letter to Welles, McDougal tells how it happened. He says he had learned that coal was being sent to Christmas Island (south of Java) to supply the rebels. Consequently, he left Anjer on the same day, as it happened, that the “Alabama” destroyed the “Winged Racer.” Once, only twenty-five miles of sea lay between the Alabama accompanied by her victim and the ship that would have been a glad avenger.<sup>7</sup> Returning to Anjer on the seventeenth from his useless excursion, McDougal learned what had occurred; and, though he followed the “Alabama” toward Singapore, the opportunity did not return.<sup>8</sup>

The conditions of navigation being what they were,—such an incident could not be unique. The sister-ship of the

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<sup>6</sup> O. R., II, 58.

<sup>7</sup> O. R., II, 502.

<sup>8</sup> O. R., II, 502; 506.

"Alabama," the "Florida," destroyed the "Jacob Bell" in latitude twenty-four degrees north, longitude sixty-six west, on the twelfth of February, 1863. Lieutenant Eytinge, commanding the U. S. S. "Shepherd Knapp," reported from St. Thomas on the nineteenth, that he had been in the same longitude as the "Jacob Bell" when she was taken by the "Florida," but was three hundred miles to the north; and, that, sailing southward, the United States cruiser must have passed "near him but not in sight." "I shall scour these seas in hot pursuit," wrote the doughty lieutenant, "and God defend the right." But he, also, had missed his chance.

No ship seems to have been more assiduous in the pursuit of the "Alabama" than the U. S. S. "Vanderbilt." She was a much more powerful ship than the enemy, carrying fifteen guns, two hundred and nine men, and having a tonnage of three thousand, three hundred and sixty. In spite of the wretched condition of her boilers, she kept to sea, month in and month out, pertinaciously on the trail of the destroyer. The "Vanderbilt" also had her opportunity, but failed because there could be no communication with her at the crucial moment. At three p. m. of Wednesday, September 16, 1863, the "Alabama" steamed into Simons' Bay, Cape of Good Hope. "Greatly discouraged by the news from home—" (writes Captain Semmes in his journal) "Vicksburg and Port Hudson fallen, Rosecrans' army marching southward, and Lee having re-crossed the Potomac. Our poor people seem to be terribly pressed by the Northern hordes of Goths and Vandals, but we shall fight it out to the end, and the end will be what an all-wise Providence shall decree." But he had also to record that the "Vanderbilt" had left that very anchorage only five days before—a fact ruefully reported by Commander Baldwin of that vessel, six weeks later.

On only two occasions was the "Alabama" in imminent danger from a United States cruiser: once when the "Kearsarge" engaged her in the English Channel; and once when the "San Jacinto" found her in the bay of Fort de France, Island of Martinique. On her first cruise the "Alabama" operated from the Azores westerly to a point not far from New

York; then, in need of coal, she went south to Martinique, where a coal-ship was expected to meet her. The cruiser anchored in the Bay of Fort Royal (now Fort de France) on the eighteenth of November, 1862, and within twenty-four hours was found there by the United States Steam Sloop, "San Jacinto," of fourteen guns. The name "San Jacinto" appears more than once in United States naval history. In 1856, this vessel participated in the bombardment of the Barrier Forts at Canton, China; and in 1862 was one of the attacking squadron at Sewell's Point, Virginia. The ship's chief notoriety, however, arose from the "Trent affair." Now came an opportunity to arrest the career of the "Alabama," and thus to gain a certain and lasting fame.

The "San Jacinto," as we have seen, had been twice under fire and was a stronger ship than the "Alabama." Captain Semmes was aware of this. Although he styled his antagonist an "old wagon," he deemed a combat imprudent.<sup>9</sup> So, under cover of nightfall, the "Alabama" slipped out of the harbor and escaped.

The mouth of the Bay of Fort de France is six or seven miles wide at the point where the "San Jacinto" could operate without violating the regulations of the port. Although Commander Ronckendorff sent out boats to watch the exit,—yet owing to the cloudiness of the night and a background of hills which rendered invisible any ship a quarter to a half-mile distant,—the "Alabama" got away, unperceived. The Union reports agree in this explanation of the escape. The Confederate version does not contradict them. The accounts of Semmes and Ronckendorff indicate that, at one moment, the two cruisers were in close proximity without knowing it.

Three hundred miles south-west of Martinique lies the little island of Blanquilla, described then as quite barren, wanting government and a settled population. Hither went the collier which the "Alabama" had met at Fort Royal, but which Semmes had ordered to a new rendezvous the day before the "San Jacinto" arrived. Eluding the Union cruiser, the "Ala-

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<sup>9</sup> O. R., I, 806.



bama" passed over to Blanquilla, received her coal and sailed on the same day that the "San Jacinto" reported at St. Thomas. Nearly three weeks later, the "San Jacinto" was likewise at Blanquilla where it was learned from the "three inhabitants" of the island that the "Alabama" had left only a few hours before her pursuer came to anchor.<sup>10</sup> Any chagrin which the Union men might have felt at a second escape was groundless. Their informants must have lied egregiously or mistaken the visitor of the preceding day; for Captain Semmes' journal indicates that, on the day in question, the "Alabama" was eleven hundred miles north-west of Blanquilla,—that is, about two hundred miles west of Jamaica, on the Havana-Kingston sea-route which she was following towards Cuba.

"Nearly all the American vessels in the China seas have changed flags, otherwise get no employment," writes Commander McDougal of the "Wyoming," under date of October 22, 1863, in a letter to Secretary Welles. "While at Macao, three fine American vessels were put under Portuguese colors, and since leaving that port I have seen but three American vessels, one at Batavia and two in the Strait of Sunda, one of which will change her flag on her arrival at Bangkok."<sup>11</sup> In 1861, the tonnage of United States vessels engaged in the foreign trade and whale-fisheries was 2,642,628,—the largest in our history. In two years this was reduced by over 600,000 tons; and during the fiscal year of 1864, another 600,000 tons was driven or taken from the sea.<sup>12</sup> Such statistics are eloquent of the effective work done by the Confederate cruisers, especially the "Alabama."

The motive for a vigorous pursuit was strong, but the interception of the predatory ships was a matter of surpassing difficulty. The game of blindman's-buff must be played out within a compass not less than that of the five oceans. Interest shifts from the West Indies to the East Indies; from the coast of Brazil to the coast of Newfoundland; from Good Hope to

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<sup>10</sup> O. R., I, 590.

<sup>11</sup> O. R. II, 474.

<sup>12</sup> Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1908: 702.

Panama. Wherever the United States merchant-flag was seen (and it was seen then as it is not seen to-day), there was danger to its commerce. No one could foresee where the blow would fall. The enemy would strike and disappear and be lost in the boundless reaches of the ocean. He would make himself felt by over-hauling and burning a Union ship of commerce, whose crew, put on shore in a neighboring port, brought the first news to their country's watchful ships,—*ex post facto* information that always came too late. Before an avenging cruiser could reach the destroyer, he would be far away, lying in wait on other paths of trade to repeat the same exploit. In the dénouement, the "Kearsarge" won great glory; but we have to record the unsuccessful efforts of many other vessels under more trying circumstances.

The force of cruisers detailed to intercept the commerce-destroyers — especially the "Alabama"—seems large; but, considering the vast area of sea that had to be patrolled, it was far from adequate. The "Alabama" seemed ubiquitous. She struck the enemy's commerce at widely separated points: in the Strait of Sunda, near Good Hope, in the West Indies, on the coast of Europe; and there was apprehension that she might proceed even farther, perhaps to the coast of California. For effective pursuit the number of the pursuers had to be large — abnormally large, because of the meager means of gaining information. The despatches indicate that at least sixteen vessels were "out" for the "Alabama" principally, and for other Confederate craft secondarily. In view of the losses at sea occasioned by these ships, the pressure on the Navy Department at Washington greatly to augment the number of the searchers must have been very considerable. Requests for re-inforcements were reiterated; but the Federal Government could not relax its grip on the throat of the Confederacy by weakening the blockade. Commerce destroying could not have an appreciable effect on the outcome of the tremendous struggle between the states. Secretary Welles, recognizing that the force of vessels could not be increased at every point, wrote to Acting Rear-Admiral Wilkes (December 15, 1862): "The efficiency of the blockade must not be impaired . . . . Your operations are

designed more particularly to capture the piratical cruisers and vessels carrying contraband, and are, therefore, secondary to the great object of the blockade."<sup>13</sup>

The search for the "Alabama" fell at the close of an epoch in naval warfare. Now vessels no longer feel their way blindly along the ocean tracks. Then, the movements of the Union cruisers were guided solely by a conjecture based on scraps of information or misinformation picked up from consuls, newspapers, or a passing ship—conjectures that often proved erroneous. November seventh, 1862, Lieutenant Baldwin surmised that the "Alabama" would be found off Cape Hatteras, whither he meant to sail,—Cape Hatteras being an important point of concentration for merchant-ships.<sup>14</sup> On that day, Semmes' journal shows the "Alabama" to have been in latitude twenty-nine north, longitude fifty-nine west,—that is, about 1,350 miles east of central Florida,—and sailing southerly.<sup>15</sup> On November twenty-first, Baldwin in the "Vanderbilt" was at Bermuda, looking for the "Alabama." It was not strange that he failed to find her there, for on that day she was perhaps 150 miles west of Trinidad. The "Tuscarora" (Commander Craven) was at Fayal, Azores Islands, November twenty-fifth, 1862. Craven guesses that the "Alabama" is cruising among the Azores or Madeira Islands. She was, in fact, two days later (so the journal indicates) three hundred and fifty miles south-east of Porto Rico. October twenty-fifth, the "Tuscarora" had been at Lisbon, she hoped on the track of Semmes' ship. That vessel was in the same latitude, but far to the west and going farther,—that is, about six hundred miles east of New York. Two days later, the journal indicates that the "Alabama" reached a point something over two hundred miles east of the metropolitan city of the enemy. When the "Tuscarora" sought the "Alabama" in Plymouth Sound, the Confederate cruiser was a thousand miles west of Libson. These are random examples of inevitable miscalculation.

It is not necessary to relate in detail the experiences of the

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<sup>13</sup> O. R., I, 588.

<sup>14</sup> O. R., I, 538.

<sup>15</sup> O. R., I, 803.

United States cruisers given the duty of intercepting the Confederate commerce destroyers. Some factors in their common experience are interesting for their bearing on the solution of the problem set for them; and because they mark the enormous difference in naval warfare now and forty-five years ago. The possession of such naval stations then, as we have since acquired, would have been of incalculable advantage to the Union ships of war. We have seen how necessary were such naval stations as points for the collection and transmission of required information. For coaling and docking they were equally necessary. The lack of such facilities of the United States vessels as much as any other cause permitted the Confederates to keep the sea and prey on their enemy's commerce. The coal capacity of ships in that day was small. No matter if they were on the track of the enemy, when fuel was exhausted it was necessary to make port to coal. This meant a long passage to a home port, or, more frequently, to a neutral harbor where United States agents had purchased at a high price a small quantity of coal. Thus it was impossible to keep the sea for an extended period. On one occasion the "Vanderbilt" was compelled to run in eight hundred miles to coal at Rio de Janeiro. The "Sacramento" reports having supplied the "Sonoma" with coal,—that vessel having been compelled to anchor off an island and cut wood for fuel. The need for coal as much as the need for information forced the Union captains to head in to port.

Complaints are often encountered that foul hulls impeded a vessel's movements, caused an undue consumption of fuel, and even prevented captures. Boilers were often so depleted that a sufficient head of steam could not be carried even when a supposed enemy was in view. The "Wachusett" had to repair her boilers at sea as best she could. Wilkes and Baldwin frequently report trouble from leaky tubes—a matter which means little to the layman but is most serious in the view of the engineer. One report mentions that a boiler on the "Vanderbilt" had given way under pressure, filling the fire-room half full of scalding water. Tubes too thin to be scaled consumed extra quantities of coal on this ship and greatly hindered her

efficiency. Such was the condition of a vessel lying at the Cape of Good Hope, expecting at any time to meet the enemy. A long voyage to the coast of the United States would be necessary, if the ship were to dock. Some small consolation could be gleaned from the probability that the enemy was in a similar condition. Other difficulties, incidental to such a service, vexed the Union commanders: enlistments expired at awkward moments; the atmosphere of foreign ports was uncongenial; the consular service was not always efficient; United States drafts were discounted or refused as payments for supplies. There were winter storms and autumnal gales; and above all, there was no "Alabama."

Eager in the pursuit, the Union vessels moved from point to point, guided by such sparse information as they could secure and by the conjecture that, wherever Northern shipping was concentrated,—as off Hatteras, in the West Indies, at Good Hope, in the Strait of Sunda, at the Azores or Gibraltar, in the English Channel,—there would a Confederate probably be in wait for the unarmed merchantman. Thus we trace the "Vanderbilt's" movements by her despatches. On November thirtieth, 1862, this ship reported from New York; December thirtieth, at Fayal, Azores Islands; January seventeenth, 1863, at Hampton Roads; February fourth, at Havana; February sixteenth at St. Thomas; June twenty-first at Barbadoes; July twenty-third at Rio de Janeiro; August seventeenth at St. Helena; September eleventh at the Cape of Good Hope; October fifth at Port Louis, Mauritius; October thirtieth at Angra Pequena, west coast of Africa; November twenty-eighth at Bahia, Brazil; December twenty-third at St. Thomas again; January seventh, 1864, back at New York. But this scarcely indicates the movements and counter-movements made by this and other vessels, often in bad physical condition, in pursuit of the "Alabama" and her consorts.

In this recital of Union difficulties, there is no intended implication that the Confederates did not have the same difficulties to meet. Their experiences fall beyond the scope of this paper; nor can we consider the allegation that foreign neutrality was stretched to the breaking-point in the Confederate interest.

We note physical conditions attending the pursuit, and no more.

During the period under review, the "Kearsarge" had been active in the pursuit of the Confederate cruisers. Relieved from her blockade of the "Sumter" at Gibraltar, she was ordered (February sixteenth, 1863) with other vessels to cruise after the "Florida" and "Alabama" in West Indian waters. In June she was back on the European station, reporting on the twelfth from Cadiz. August twenty-seventh, 1863, Captain Winslow of the "Kearsarge" writes from Fayal, where he had been cruising in search of the Confederates. September fifteenth, we hear of him at Ferrol, Spain; and on October thirtieth, he reports from Brest, France, where his ship was stationed during the winter of 1863-1864. Here his chief care was to watch the movements of the "Georgia," "Florida," and "Rappahannock." He was under orders to look out especially for the last-named vessel.<sup>16</sup> February twentieth, 1864, Winslow writes of his intention to proceed up the Channel in search of the "Rappahannock" and "Georgia."<sup>17</sup> At the end of May, we learn from his despatches, he had gone to the Scheldt to watch events.<sup>18</sup>

The "Alabama" returned to the Cape of Good Hope from her cruise in the East Indies and left, towards the end of March, for a French port — understood to be Brest — to make repairs. "At ten a. m. steamed out of the harbor amidst the hurrahs of surrounding boats filled with curious spectators," writes Captain Semmes in his journal of March 25, 1864; "and passed [just inside the harbor] the Yankee steamer 'Quang Tung,' with the Yankee colors up, coming in. Half an hour more and we should have made a prize of her. Such are the chances of war."

It was the last cruise of the "Alabama." The vessel held her northerly course for eleven weeks, crossing the "Line" on the second of May. The passage was quite uneventful save for the capture of two United States merchant-vessels south of the Equator, which were forthwith burned. Near the end of May

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<sup>16</sup> O. R., II, 579.

<sup>17</sup> O. R., II, 607.

<sup>18</sup> O. R., III, 50.

a gale broke the monotony in the weather conditions. Having taken on a pilot off the *Lizard*, the "*Alabama*" steamed into Cherbourg harbor, Saturday, the eleventh of June, 1864.

As already remarked, the "*Kearsarge*" had gone to the Scheldt, late in May, to watch events. When the "*Alabama*" appeared in Cherbourg harbor, the United States consular-agent at that port (M. Edouard Liais) telegraphed the fact to William L. Dayton, the United States Minister at Paris. Minister Dayton in turn telegraphed the news to Captain Winslow of the "*Kearsarge*" lying at Flushing.<sup>19</sup> Winslow replied that he would be off Cherbourg breakwater about Wednesday, the fifteenth.<sup>20</sup> He was better than his promise: he arrived in the offing at Cherbourg at about eleven a. m. of Tuesday.<sup>21</sup> He at once sent a boat in to communicate with the United States consul, which found the "*Alabama*" lying in the roads.

"Tuesday, June 14 . . . Weather ugly and cool with an occasional spitting of rain," runs Semmes' journal. "Great excitement on board, the '*Kearsarge*' having made her appearance off the eastern entrance of the breakwater about eleven a. m. Sent an order on shore immediately for coal [100 tons] and sent down the yards on the mizzenmast and the topgallant yards, and otherwise preparing the ship for action." And the entry for the next day reads: "My crew seem to be in the right spirit, a quiet spirit of determination pervading both officers and men. The combat will no doubt be contested and obstinate, but the two ships are so equally matched that I do not feel at liberty to decline it. God defend the right, and have mercy upon the souls of those who fall, as many of us must"<sup>22</sup> In a letter to Flag-Officer Barron of the Confederate Navy at Paris, Captain Semmes wrote, June fourteenth: "The '*Kearsarge*' is off the port, which I understand, of course, as a challenge. As we are about equally matched, I shall go out to engage her as soon as I can make the necessary preparations, which will probably be to-morrow."<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> O. R., III, 50; 52; 53.

<sup>20</sup> O. R., III, 52.

<sup>21</sup> O. R., III, 64; 677.

<sup>22</sup> O. R., III, 677.

<sup>23</sup> O. R., III, 651.

The challenge was sent through the agency of a French gentleman, the same day.<sup>24</sup> But the "Alabama" was not ready for five days. On the nineteenth, the weather was favorable. A moderate breeze was blowing from the west; the sky was clear save for a few wandering clouds. The "Kearsarge" discovered the "Alabama" leaving the harbor at 10:20 a. m., accompanied by a French ironclad and a British yacht. The hour for which so many seamen had longed, was come.

Both ships moved well without the three-mile limit, and there the fight took place. The log of the "Kearsarge" tells us that the action began at 10:57; that the "Alabama" surrendered at 12:10, and sank fourteen minutes later.

The search for the "Alabama" was ended. Never again will a sea-ranger be able so long and so successfully to avoid capture or destruction by so large a force of pursuers. The search-light prevents such escapes as that of the "Alabama" from the harbor of Fort de France. Wireless telegraphy affords commanders in port or on the high sea direct information about the position of an enemy. The ocean cable keeps governments in touch with their vessels on the opposite side of the earth. Statesmanship provides nations with convenient naval stations for the service of their ships in all strategic quarters. Let us hope that perfection in the facilities for naval warfare will not encourage nations to employ them.

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<sup>24</sup>O. R., III, 648.